ISS National Lab Public Day Questions

Q1: Regarding the period of performance (POP) for the cooperative agreement. By definition, cooperative agreements are renewed annually not to exceed five years. Is NASA seeking a waiver to extend the period of performance?

A1: This will be a multi-year cooperative agreement renewed annually for a minimum 5 year POP. It will be longer if we can get a waiver. Final guidance on the POP will be provided as part of the Cooperative Agreement Notice (CAN).

Q2: Would NASA be interested in obtaining a sample of a cooperative agreement that does not require annual renewals? It would be beneficial not to have to deal with annual renewals so that we don't have to be preoccupied with renewals almost immediately after one is completed.

A2: Yes, please provide any samples to Amada Heslep at amanda.j.heslep@nasa.gov.

Q3: What about DOD Space Test Program payloads? Are they considered ISS National Lab payloads or would they be considered NASA payloads?

A3: Without reference to your specifically mentioned payload, every potential payload will be handled on a case-by-case basis – If NASA has an interest in the technology for exploration it will be evaluated as a NASA payload. . If there is no NASA interest then the sponsor or the PI may pursue it with the National Lab Entity (NLE).

Q4: Do you envision the NLE being the selecting entity for the NASA Funded Grants?

A4: NASA is still developing the written clarification to this question. An answer will be provided prior to the CAN release.

Q5: You have stressed the role of NASA with space technology development. How do you envision the synergy between technologies that will be useful to both NASA and non-NASA?

A5: Dual-use proposals will not fall under NLE responsibility, but under NASA responsibility. NLE should refer such proposals to NASA first for assessment. Spacecraft technology in general will reside at NASA.

Q6: Could the efforts of NASA be viewed as a resource?

A6: It is not clear what you mean by "efforts of NASA", so you may want to rephrase your question. However: Advancements made by NASA in a dual-use technology should be seen as a resource for advancing the state-of-the-art.

Q7: If commercial entity interested in demonstrating technology for their use would they come in under NLE?

A7: If the technology demonstration addresses a NASA requirement or interest (as a dual interest item), it will fall under the NASA ISS usage; if not, then the sponsor should approach the NLE.

Q8: We have a Space Act Agreement that extends into the Period of Performance of this effort. Will offerors be required to seek out participation of organizations with existing SAAs and MOUs and be required to include them in the proposals?

A8: No. The NL E will interact with the existing organizations once established. Current MOUs and SAAs will be honored. The NLE may need to interact with these organizations after award but not during proposals since any NLE selected will be required to honor existing agreements.

Q9: Is the $15 Million per year just for management or does it include research?

A9: The $15 Million is assistance. The NLE can decide how to allocate it.

Q10: The Authorization Act includes downmass. This is not mentioned in the CAN.

A10: NASA will modify the CAN to include information on downmass for the NLE.

Q11: Regarding payload management – How do you foresee NLE communication with NASA regarding real-time replanning? In your example you mentioned working directly with the PIs not the sponsoring activity.

A11: It depends upon the scope of the replanning that is needed. Minor day-to-day replans would likely be worked with PI, while major replans, such as depicted in the case study or if the replan would impact the other payloads in the NLE's plan, this would implicate the need to involve the NLE.

Q12: Would an agreement with Bob Bigelow go through NLE?

A12: Any flight of a potential payload would be done by NASA assuming it involves spacecraft technology of interest to NASA. If NASA declines interest, then the NLE could take the proposal under its evaluation.

Q13: What is NASA's involvement in determining "value to the nation?" Is anyone else involved in assigning value?

A13: NLE is responsible for identifying "value to the nation" and for establishing its value criteria, and for substantiating its individual judgments of value.

Q14: Regarding the funding structure. Will the user or non-NASA sponsor be participating in NLE support?

A14: NASA is still working the clarification to this question. An answer will be provide prior to the CAN release.

Q15: Please clarify the difference between cost-sharing and program income.

A15: Both of the terms are defined in the NASA Grant and Cooperative Agreement Handbook. However NASA is still developing additional written clarification to this question. Further guidance will be provide prior to the CAN release.

Q16: We are already a 501(c)(3) engaged in many ISS activities. Can we found a chapter or a non-related autonomous division?

A16: NASA is still developing the written clarification to this question. An answer will be provided prior to the CAN release.

Q17: Will the NLE interface with international partners?

A17: Not directly. The NLE will work through NASA for any international partner collaboration or use of their hardware since these involve existing government-to-government agreements.

Q18: Would NLE advocate participation from outside the US?

A18: This is a domestic initiative focused on national applications for the benefit of the United States, but there is no prohibition on NLE involvement with collaborative activities including non U.S. parties.

Q19: Can we recruit from non-partner countries?

A19: Research from non-partner countries would have to be approved under existing procedures between the ISS partners. This would require the involvement of NASA due to the government-to-government agreements.

Q19a: Can the NLE advocate its own research?

A19a: No. The NLE will not be performing in-house research that creates an actual or apparent OCI.

Q20: I saw an article in the press that said that the ISS would be at end of life in 2014.

A20: ISS is authorized to 2020 and beyond.

Q21: There are multiple additional specialized resources other than rack space and crew time onboard the ISS. Will those be available?

A21: Yes. ISS assets are either part of the core vehicle systems or part of the payload systems interfaces. Payload interfaces will be provided to the NLE either on an allocation basis (like upmass) or as needed to enable the research (like power or thermal cooling). Vehicle systems interfaces are managed by NASA and can be made available on a case-by-case basis if the payload systems interfaces are not sufficient to accomplish the research. NLE will refer proposed use of vehicle systems to NASA, who will negotiate potential cost (or in kind exchange), which will be then shared with the NLE to determine a final decision.

Q22: Can we use the special purpose dexterous manipulator or the sliding control?

A22: Yes, this is conceivable however if development and qualification of a new capability is required, this could also be quite expensive and would have to be taken into consideration by the NLE.

Q23: Question about the evaluation and selection of programs. Are there prohibitions or expectations regarding selection of programs sponsored by other agencies (NIH for example)?

A23: Other Agencies have their own processes to determine merit, relevance, and feasibility. The NLE shall honor those agency's processes and internal prioritization in making its final prioritization decisions. The NLE should expect to receive a series of prioritized streams of potential experiments from these agencies, and should take into consideration the other agency's prioritization of proposals when selection, prioritizing, and scheduling NL payloads.. An example of this queuing model will be provided with the final CAN.

Q25: I urge you to clarify the definition of organization/legal entity for qualifications. This can be interpreted that no existing entity can bid.

A25: NASA is still developing the written clarification to this question. An answer will be provided prior to the CAN release.

Q26: Would any free flyer (like industrial space facility) have to come thru NASA and not NLE?

A26: No necessarily. It is conceivable that NASA would have no interest from a space technology or NASA research requirements and NLE could evaluate that proposal directly.

Q27: How is the interface going to work for commercial cargo?

A27: It would work the same as it does now – it is invisible to payload what it is launched on. NASA has that interface and provides standard interface documents for all launch options.

Q28: Section 504(a)(3)'s intent for the entity to be exclusively engaged in this effort. I interpret this as meaning that you can have a parent organization – the entity just can't do anything to support it.

A28: NASA is still developing the written clarification to this question. An answer will be provided prior to the CAN release.

Q29: Does NASA see any restriction on contracting out any responsibilities?

A29: There are no special restrictions on the NLE in the CAN for contracting out. .

Q30: Is there a limit on how much the NLE can contract out?

A30: NASA is still developing the written clarification to this question. An answer will be provided prior to the CAN release.

Q31: There is the assumption that the user will incur costs that need to be reimbursed to NASA. Would costs flow from the user through the NLE to NASA (or the provider)?

A31: NASA would need to negotiate arrangements on a case-by-case basis. NASA does lease it's unique facilities for testing if required (off-gassing, vibration, etc.)

Q32: Regarding OCI. If the NLE contracts out evaluation and prioritization what will be required to document OCI mitigation?

A32: Each proposer needs to engage their own legal council to demonstrate that their OCI plan is sufficient for whatever management approach they propose.

Q33: I'm struggling with prioritization – multiple streams of prioritization all feed into the NLE and the NLE will also solicit additional experiments. Is the NLE responsible for prioritizing the entire set?

A33: The NLE will receive some pre-prioritized proposals/experiments from other government agencies and/or private firms and will be expected to honor those when determining final selection, prioritization and scheduling..

Q34: Will there be national security research – are security clearances required for DOD payloads?

A34: No.

Q35: Does NLE have final authority on priorities?

A35: NLE has final prioritization authority for its designated portion of the ISS. NASA and International Partner priorities may supercede NLE as per the terms of existing statutes and or international agreements.

Q36: Will the NLE list represent other Government agencies?

A36: NASA is unsure what you mean by "list". The NLE customers and clients will include other government agencies.

Q37: Question regarding external sources of funding. How can the NLE accept funds without creating an Organizational Conflict of Interest? Is there any legitimate source of funds?

A37: Yes, NASA believes there are. First and foremost, engage your own legal counsel so that you can defend your position.

Q38: Do you see a role on the part of NLE for safety or mission assurance?

A38: Payloads have to provide documentation to Payload Safety Review Panel for review. NLE needs to provide info to users to comply with safety requirements. Mission assurance level is up to the NLE. NASA will not require 99.999% mission assurance of the NLE, but will require safety assurance.

Q39: To what extent has payload safety been automated? Is there a website?

A39: Payload safety has not been automated; it is still the developer's responsibility to provide data.

Q40: Will the NLE be committed/encouraged to help PI's find funding?

A40: A key role of the NLE is the “matchmaking” between funding sources and experiments. These funding sources could include NASA, the NLE’s annual operating budget, or third party sponsorship.

Q41: In order to more successfully bring on payloads in 6-months to a year we need operational state models or test state models. Will NASA provide that to NLE? When developing interface control documents, there are paper documents supported by off-line analytical work. Access to this information would shorten the payload development process so that we can better understand how the payload will be operated on station. Is there a live simulation?

A41: Yes, NASA has models for many of those operational states. However, NASA is doing payload integration with the overall ISS, not the NLE. NASA does have payload integration test facilities that will be made available to NLE payloads for integrated testing and interface verification.

Q42: What standards must education activities meet?

A42: NASA Office of Education must meet Department of Education standards (at a minimum) and those standards would flow down to the NLE.

Q43: Basic physical and life sciences research is in the NASA portfolio. Will that be shifting to the NLE?

A43: As stated in the draft CAN a portion of this portfolio will be transitioned to the NLE over time as existing grant’s are completed. There is no plan to terminate any existing research grants.